



NATIONAL
SAFETY
MONTH 07

Poisoning Prevention

Not all poisons are poisonous. And children aren't the only ones at risk.

Thirty-two percent of deaths occurring at home or in the community are due to poisoning – it is the second greatest health risk people face, after motor vehicle accidents. And, contrary to popular belief, most fatalities occur among people over the age of 19, particularly among people aged 40-50.

Although warnings about poisoning conjure up the skull and crossbones image, many accidental poisonings result from the ingestion of non-lethal substances in toxic amounts or mixtures. The declining number of child fatalities due to poisoning proves that risk prevention education works. With a little more knowledge, every family member can live safely and responsibly.

Poisoning Risks

- Misuse of prescription drugs, e.g., taking incompatible drugs, improper dosages, non-medical use
- Mixing drugs and alcohol; a small amount can lead to liver failure
- Illegal drug use, particularly narcotics
- Exposure to household toxins, including cleaning products, paints and home improvement products, lawn and garden preparations, etc.
- Carbon monoxide poisoning, a risk in homes with gas or oil heating, appliances or an attached garage

Tips for Prevention

- Lock up all household products and medications out of children's reach and sight. Go a step further, and put medications in a place where no one else has access to them.
- Prevent drug interactions by asking your pharmacist or doctor to periodically review your prescriptions. Inform them of any over-the-counter medications you're taking, to insure against interactions.
- Never mix medicines with alcohol, take more than the prescribed amount, or borrow prescription medicine from someone else. Do not take medications that are past their expiration date.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector near your home's sleeping area, making sure it cannot be covered by draperies or furniture. Change the battery each spring and fall.
- In case of accidental poisoning, read the label and follow the directions. Don't automatically induce vomiting; it may cause more harm than good.
- Keep all drugs, household products and pesticides in their original containers. Follow label instructions for use and for safe discarding.
- Post the national toll-free number for the Poison Control Center near your phone. It's 800-222-1222.

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